

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS  
7TH DISTRICT, MARYLAND

RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

RANKING MEMBER,  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON BENGHAZI

COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST  
GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS  
MATERIALS

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

December 14, 2015

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.  
President of the Maryland Senate  
State House, H-107  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Michael E. Busch  
Maryland House Speaker  
State House, H-101  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

☐ 2230 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2007  
(202) 225-4741  
FAX: (202) 225-3178

☐ DISTRICT OFFICES:  
1010 PARK AVENUE  
SUITE 105  
BALTIMORE, MD 21201-5037  
(410) 685-9199  
FAX: (410) 685-9399

☐ 754 FREDERICK ROAD  
CATONSVILLE, MD 21228-4504  
(410) 719-8777  
FAX: (410) 455-0110

☐ 8267 MAIN STREET  
ROOM 102  
ELLICOTT CITY, MD 21043-9903  
(410) 465-8259  
FAX: (410) 465-8740

[www.cummings.house.gov](http://www.cummings.house.gov)

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

I write today to express my strong support for the creation of a Universal Voter Registration program that would automatically add to state voting rolls all Maryland residents who are eligible to vote.

In a speech he gave earlier this year in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday, then-Attorney General Eric Holder warned that:

It has been clear in recent years that fair and free access to the franchise is still, in some areas, under siege. Shortly after the historic election of President Obama in 2008, numerous states and jurisdictions attempted to impose rules and laws that had the effect of restricting Americans' opportunities to vote—particularly, and disproportionately, communities of color.<sup>1</sup>

Numerous studies have documented the measures states have adopted to restrict citizens' — particularly low-income and minority citizens' — access to the voting booth. For example, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of this month, 36 states had adopted measures requiring residents to show a proof of identification at the polls, and these laws were in force in 32 states.<sup>2</sup> Last year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report concluding that voter identification laws have led to a statistically significant decrease in voter turnout.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Attorney General Eric Holder, Speech to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Bloody Sunday and the Selma-to-Montgomery Marches (March 8, 2015) (online at: <http://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-holder-reaffirms-commitment-voting-rights-speech-commemorate-50th>).

<sup>2</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Voter Identification Requirements: Voter ID Laws* (online at <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/voter-id.aspx#Intro>) (accessed Dec. 11, 2015).

President Thomas V. Mike Miller  
Speaker Michael Busch  
Page 2

At the federal level, I support a range of legislation that would strengthen voting rights throughout the nation. For example, I am a cosponsor of the Voter Empowerment Act (H.R. 12), which would amend the Help America Vote Act and the National Voter Registration Act to improve all facets of the voting process.

I also believe that Maryland should seize every opportunity to be a national leader in eliminating all impediments that stand between eligible citizens and the voting booth. For that reason, I believe the General Assembly should adopt legislation during the upcoming session that will create a Universal Voter Registration program.

Such a program should utilize data from a variety of state sources, not just the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), to identify citizens who are eligible to vote. A recent study released by the University of Michigan's Transportation Research Institute found that in 2012, more than 9% of U.S. households did not have a private vehicle, and in Baltimore, more than 30% of households lacked a vehicle. Many Maryland residents who do not own cars have never obtained a driver's license and limiting a Universal Voter Registration program to the use of data collected by the MVA would exclude these individuals from the voter rolls.<sup>4</sup>

Thank you for your steadfast efforts to ensure that every eligible Maryland resident is able to cast a ballot. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to support the creation of a Universal Voter Registration program in our state.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

---

<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Issues Related to State Voter Identification Laws* (Sept. 2014) (GAO-14-634). See also *GAO Report: Voter ID Laws Stunted Turnout*, The Hill (Oct. 8, 2014) (<http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/220147-gao-voter-id-laws-stunted-turnout-in-kansas-and-tennessee>).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Sivak, "Has Motorization in the U.S. Peaked? Part 4: Households without a Light-Duty Vehicle, University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (Jan. 2014) (online at <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/102535/102988.pdf>).